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HOMEMAKERS' CHAT

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SUBJECT: "Appetite Appeal"...Information from the home economists of the United States Department of Agriculture.

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Have you ever had well-prepared food go begging when it gets to the table? A lot of homemakers have. No matter how good each dish in it may be...a meal can lack zest and pep.

But the home economists of the United States Department of Agriculture say we can avoid dull meals. The key to their suggestions on ways to give menus appetite appeal plus lies in one word..."variety." A meal in which the flavors, the colors, the textures of different foods are very much alike can be a dreary meal. On the other hand, one with some contrasts can often pique the dulllest appetite.

Let's take the flavors first. A bland food can be set off by a stronger flavored one. For example, an omelet or souffle may be appreciated more when it's served with a vegetable like cabbage or broccoli or onions...something with a robust flavor. Fish may taste all the better when served with cole slaw or pickle or sliced tomatoes. A touch of sour flavor in one dish may improve the sweet flavor of another.

As for colors...well...you know how we use the adjective "colorless" when we're talking about something dull and unattractive. And that term can be applied to meals as well as anything else. But meals don't have to be colorless. We can get the bright green of quick-cooked vegetables...the fresh colors of raw ones...the brown of potatoes baked in their skins...the reds of beets, tomatoes...the orange of carrots...the deep colors of ripe fruit...in reality, we have a riot of colors to use. It's easy to get some touches of color in our meals. And those touches of color may save the meal from monotony.

Now...about the textures. There are soft foods and chewy ones and those that are crisp. The different textures tend to complement each other. A meal made up completely of soft foods doesn't give the teeth enough work. But it's hard work to eat a meal made up entirely of food that needs long chewing. And nearly every meal could use a bit of crispness. By keeping the textures in mind, a homemaker can get a nice balance as she plans her meals.

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